

Axes of Symmetry on Perfins.

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In the majority of cases, the intended ‘reading’ of the Perfin letter(s) appearing on a Stamp is straight forward. However, due to symmetry, some Perfins can be ambiguous. The 3 axes of symmetry are:

- A vertical axis through the centre of the letter, such as the letter “A”. Spin it 180° about the vertical axis passing through its apex and it still reads “A”.
- A horizontal axis through the centre of the letter, such as the letter “K”. Spin it 180° about the horizontal axis passing through its centre and it still reads “K”.
- An axis through the centre of the letter, perpendicular to the surface of the stamp, such as the letter “N”. Spin it 180° about this axis and it still reads “N”.

Some letters have more than one axis of symmetry, whereas seven have none at all - see the table below. For simplicity, letters such as “B” and “S” are assumed to have the same sized top and bottom, but in reality they are often asymmetric i.e. the top of a “B” is often bigger than its bottom, and so on.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
Vert	A							H	I				M		O					T	U	V	W	X	Y	
Horiz		B	C	D	E			H	I		K				O											
Perp								H	I					N	O			S					X		Z	

The letter “H” is extremely difficult to catalogue accurately as the letter has all three axes of symmetry. Thus, any test for a fit has to be carried out four times to cover all the possibilities!

But where’s this all leading to, do I hear? Well, it’s just a bit of observational fun so that collectors are aware that other options can be tried if a fit can’t be found for an ‘ambiguous’ Perfin.

1952-1954



O0430.01

1975-1990



K0950.01



For example, you may be looking at the Perfin “E/OC” or “HD/K”, neither of which appear in the E’s or H’s. They are not ‘New Dies’. Simply rotate them 180° round their horizontal axes and you have “OC/E” (O0430.01) and “K/HD” (K0950.01) respectively.

1895-1920



1890-1920



H5530.01

1890-1920



O2210.01



Examples with more than three letters are less easy to find, but “HOOD” (H5530.01) is a good example as it also reads “HOOD” if rotated about its horizontal axis of symmetry. “OZO” (O2210.01) is a ‘palindrome’ if spun about an axis perpendicular to the plane of the stamp.

1975-1980



A2767.01

1895-1897



H5150.01

1975-1986



O0095.01M

1960-1965



T3313.01

1936-1939



W7367.01



Examples with vertical axes of symmetry with more than three letters can also be found. Five are shown here in their intended orientation, including the vertical axis ‘palindrome’ “AHA(T)” (A2767.01).

Well, that was the situation back in 2011, but another ‘Symmetrical’ die of interest has recently been reported by **David Batty** - “OM/W” (O1300.01). The stamp was perforated from the front, and is postmarked (Roch)dale, Lancs, with a ‘30’ year slug.

c1930



O1300.01



Note!

In ambiguous cases such as this where it could be “OM/W” or “MO/W”, look at the lettering from the **punch direction**.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive study (AA, AB, AC, AD, AE etc, ... all spring to mind), but if you come across an interesting example, or have an example where no image is available, or simply have a better example than illustrated, I would be pleased to hear from you!

Information correct to **13th May 2019**.